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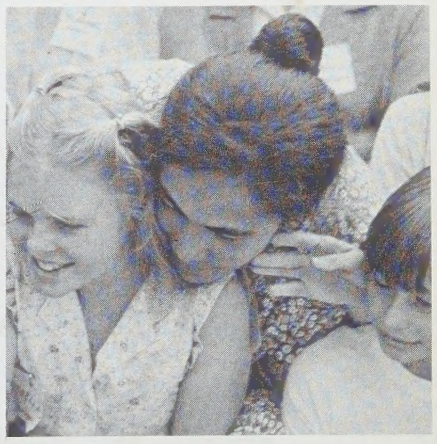

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COVER: An aerial view of Melbourne the River Yarra separating some of its sive parklands from its downtown are ture compliments of the Ministry of To Government of Victoria. *INSERT: members and friends of the Focolare ment in Australia greeting Chiara Lu she leaves Melbourne after her visit the*

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SPECIAL

THE PHILIPPINES

At The Heart of The 7000 Islands

by ENZO FONDI

Manila and Tagaytay, in the heart of the only Catholic country in Eastern Asia, were two important moments of the Far Eastern trip of Chiara Lubich and a group of Focolare leaders.

Manila, January 13, 1982

The flight from Hong Kong to Manila was very short, but the hospitality aboard the plane was in reverse proportion to the trip's duration.

This flight marked the conclusion of a very important leg of our Asian journey. We were leaving behind Japan, Korea, Hong Kong — places where Christianity had hardly penetrated — and were flying towards the largest Catholic country in the Far East. The cultures, persons, and nations met in the previous part of the trip, however, had left in us a sense of discovery — we had had the opportunity to approach them with love and to find a wealth of authentic spiritual values. They are values which should be explored in depth, not only to be able to understand the Oriental soul, but also to enrich our Western mentality which needs to be expanded and vitalized by contact with the great civilizations of the Orient. Indeed, the Christian community itself could be enriched through a better communion with the cultures linked to the great religions.

And here we were at last, in the heart of the 7,000 islands, on a hot, humid Philippine winter night. The welcome at the airport could not have been warmer or more thoughtful. All the practical matters were quickly taken care of and soon we were on the road to the Mariapolis Center of Tagaytay, about thirty miles from Manila.

Tagaytay, January 14

As we traveled, we could see Lake Taal, the enormous crater of an extinct volcano with its islands off in the mist. On one of them there remains a still active volcano which, we are told, occasionally begins to act up and emanate a reddish glow.

On a high rocky ridge where the Tagaytay Mariapolis Center is located, the climate is much cooler than in Manila. In these rainy months it is necessary, in fact, to protect yourself against the wind that can carry a chill from the northern parts.

This is where the first Asian Mariapolis Center was established in 1967 on a small spur of land on a steep, green hill. A few wooden houses stood on it at the time, but they were swept away by a typhoon, clearing the way for new construction: today there is a two-story building with a hall that can hold 300 people, kitchens and offices. Another building holds accommodations for 100 persons, a reception hall, caretaker's apartment, all of it surrounded by meadows, tropical plants and palm trees.

About sixty percent of the expenses for the construction and furnishings was financed by the generous contributions of the volunteers[1] from Switzerland. The rest, including the land, was paid for entirely by the Philippine members of the Movement, except for the $8,000 given by Chiara Lubich out of the amount she had received from the Templeton Prize.[2]

The Focolare Movement in the Philippines has a significant history which merits being retold here briefly.

On February 22, 1966, three women and two men focolarini[3] landed at the Manila Airport. Due to some mishap, nobody was there to welcome them but the first of a series of providential circumstances began when a gentleman whom they had met on the plane offered to take them into the city.

These first focolarini were not arriving to a land completely foreign to the spirituality of the Movement. Several years before, a

Divine Word Missionary priest had already begun to spread this spirituality and had even reached the point of printing every month 10 thousand copies of a leaflet with experiences of the "word of life."

During the first few days, as they were traveling by jeep from meeting to meeting in the scorching heat, the focolarini met several hundred persons. After the first week, when they tried to take stock of the situation, they realized that all the vocations of the Work of Mary[4] were already blossoming around them. In the meantime, "Divine Providence" had made it possible to start a sort of publishing house. It didn't take much to realize that there was indeed a special plan of God for this nation.

Philippine Ministry of Tourism

The invitation and blessing of the then Archbishop of Manila, Cardinal Rufino Santos, were decisive in the resolution to settle in the Philippines, but as always, the Church with its supernatural intuition, opened an even wider horizon for the future.

The opening of Focolare Centers in Manila in fact, set the basis for an even vaster expansion of the Movement. The Philippines, which is the Catholic heart of Asia, became the model for the Work of Mary throughout the whole continent. Following the first Mariapolis[5] in Korea and Hong Kong at the end of the sixties, the first Focolare Centers were opened in these countries. The year 1967 saw the opening of the first Focolare Center in Tokyo, and 1980, the one in Taipei. In 1981, a Center was opened in Bangkok, Thailand.

Today, there are about 100 Philippine focolarine and focolarini, a few hundred volunteers and gen[6] and about 100 thousand people forming the Focolare community at large.

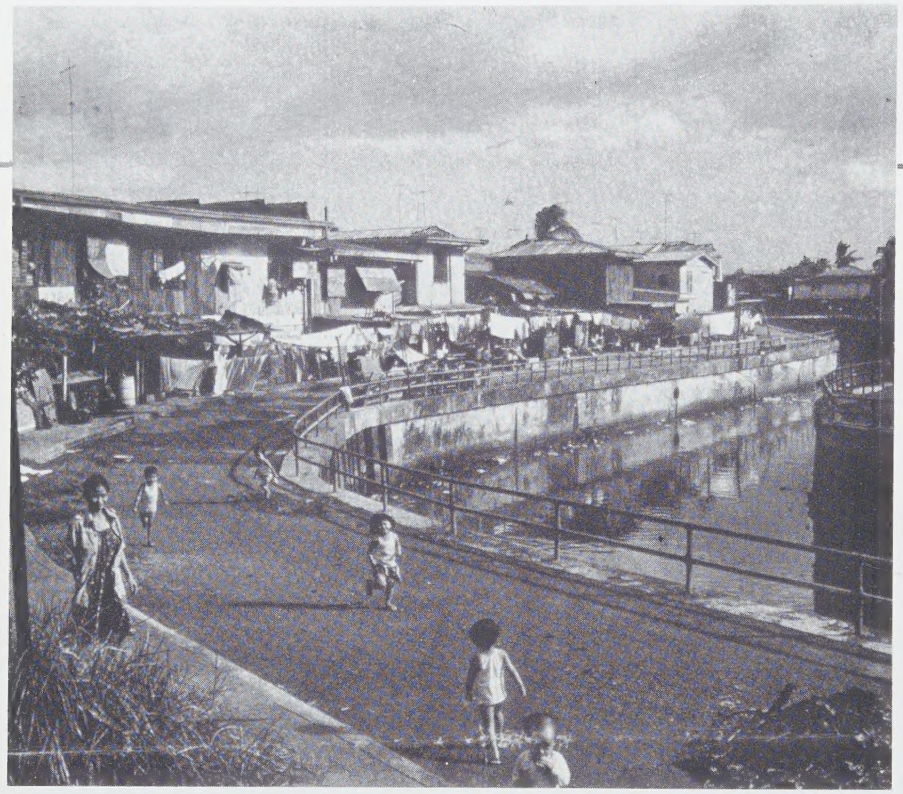
New City Magazine, the publication of the Focolare Movement in this part of the world, has a circulation of 15 thousand and provides contact and spiritual food for thousands of members scattered in the most remote corners of the Asiatic continent. In the last few years, Focolare publications have begun to be printed in Chinese, Japanese and Korean.

In its fifteen years of life, the Formation Center in Tagaytay has seen thousands of persons pass through its doors, and its function is not merely to serve members of the Focolare Movement. Among the groups often welcomed there, are those of the young representatives of the Rissho Kosei-kai. By now, this Buddhist association looks on Tagaytay as a spiritual pause on its travels throughout the Philippines, where it is engaged in work of reconstruction and reconciliation to help heal the deep wounds left by the Japanese occupation of this country.

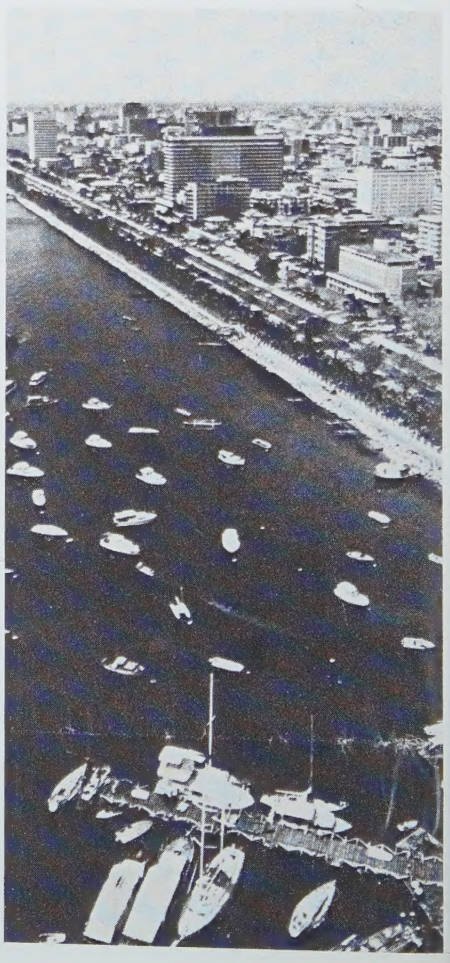
Philippine Ministry of Tourism

ABOVE: The Mayon Volcano, a still active volcano famous for its cone-shaped peak, on the island of Luzon.

LEFT: The colorful, lively folklore of the religious feasts in the Philippines. For instance one of the most famous feasts is the Santo Niño (Holy Infant of Prague), celebrated for an entire day in Cebu. There are also many feasts in honor of Our Lady. To the left we see an image of the Blessed Mother being carried in procession.



Two views of Manila, reflecting the still unresolved social imbalance. TO THE LEFT: A poor sector of the city. BELOW: A rich residential zone in front of the ocean. The city is surrounded by a belt of slums crowded with hundreds of thousands of people.



The evening of our arrival, we could see the Taal volcano in the distance; it was quiet, its crater at water level. The sunset, glowing with the brilliant colors of the tropics, seemed to be a promise of the splendid days to come.

Tagaytay, January 17

After two intense days with the focolarini of Manila, Cebu, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Bangkok, we moved to a government-owned convention center nearby because its meeting hall, with the capacity to seat 1,000 people, was just what we needed to hold all those who had come for the third day of meetings. They were the many members active in the various branches of the Movement representing the great variety of environments where the spirituality of the Movement is lived.

As Chiara answered their questions, it seemed as though she had always been present there with them. In the conversation that followed, what should be the new attitude toward other religions was clarified — and not only for the Philippines, but one to mark a turning point for the entire Movement. The encounter with the non-Christian religions came into focus as one of the Movement's most important goals and, in the final analysis, as the way to bring Christ to those who do not yet know him.

The joy of this visit, so eagerly anticipated for fifteen years, was deep and irrepressible. It seemed to come from a particular presence of God which was the fruit of years of a steady commitment carried out with generosity — through many concrete expressions of love — in the face of many difficulties overcome in unity.

Tagaytay, January 18

Another memorable day: An institute for the dialogue with other religions, part of the Marian School of the Focolare Movement, was inaugurated. It was the fruit of our contacts with the Buddhists of Japan and, above all, an answer to the need to deepen our own faith in relationship to the great religions of the Orient.

(continued on page 6)

SPECIAL

THE GREAT SILENCE OF BACLARAN

Whoever passes through Manila must not miss a visit to the Shrine of Baclaran, located in the outskirts of the city.

In the Shrine, before the image of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, something unique has been happening night and day, ever since the Church was first consecrated in 1958.

Even Wednesday, the day of the Novena, is not much different from the other days. From the far end of the long, central nave, a continuous flow of people, on their knees, advance towards the main altar where a copy of an ancient Byzantine icon is hung: the image of Our Lady.

Flocks of people enter in a steady stream through the Church's many doors. One cannot watch the event without being in some way involved. It is not so much the size of the crowds — people coming from every part of Manila — that is so striking, nor the spontaneous and simple expression of a deep, widespread devotion; rather, it is the fact that this dense crowd, surrounding us on all sides, yet hardly touching us, is really praying. The silence envelops us, as though drawing us into a calm, serene, bottomless whirlpool.

The noise of the city outside seems flung back by the wide-open doors of the Church where each one comes to be alone with God here, in the house of his Mother.

But why here? Why do thousands of persons come, day and night, to practice a devotion which, in the Philippines, is only a few decades old — to venerate an image which has nothing extraordinary in its brief, local history? Perhaps there is an answer, but if based on purely rational criteria, it will never be satisfactory. All I know is that should I someday come back to Manila, I would again visit the Shrine of Baclaran, just as Pope John II did last February. He had been there many years ago and, when he returned, it was to Our Lady of Baclaran that he made his first visit: it was to her that he dedicated his first address: "To you Mother, I offer all the peoples of Asia," was his prayer before the eight thousand religious who filled the Church.

Another question comes spontaneously to mind: "Does this deep, sincere devotion really bring one closer to God and to the Sacraments?" The answer I received came from an old Australian Redemptorist missionary, with hair as white as his tunic, who spends hours and hours hearing confessions in English and Tagalog. The confessionals, he told me, are always full, sometimes with people who do not even know how to say the Act of Contrition.

Here, as in every other Marian Shrine, the piety of the people blossoms into the life of the sacraments, into the re-discovery of being a Christian. It is the work of Mary who, as a Mother, always generates the life of the Church in her members.

I spoke with a priest who read some of the hundreds of letters which reach the Shrine every week: letters of thanks to Mary for new-found peace in the family, an illness healed, a good husband. And then, in that great, captivating silence, we hear the words of the Novena: "Dearest Mother of Perpetual Help, help us in our needs . . . and make it so that, though immersed in our own worries, we do not forget the needs of others."

There are, in the Philippines, other expressions of religiosity among the people, and each has its own typical folklore and celebration. Famous among these are the feast of the "Black Nazarene" in Manila, and that of the "Santo Niño" (The Holy Infant of Prague) in Cebu, in addition to the many passion plays held throughout Holy Week, and the innumerable feasts of Our Lady who is the Patron of the Philippines. As in all such traditional celebrations, there is a variety of customs and expressions which, while differing from country to country, still seems to have something in common.

This is not the case at Baclaran. If, on the outside, everything looks like any other Shrine with its souvenir stands and street vendors, inside, in the Church, everything is different.

Perhaps here can be seen the real aspect of the Philippines' religiosity and, in a certain sense, the religiosity of all the peoples of Asia.

Pope Paul VI, in the first historic trip of a Pontiff to the Far East, had defined with his sharp perception and sensitivity, the characteristic feature of the Oriental soul: "The peoples of the Orient have a natural disposition toward the religious mystery, which seems to be a prophetic sign of their call to Christian Revelation. The natural inclination of the Asiatic spirit is to prayer."

The Philippines, an agricultural country, is in the process of a great agrarian reform. Often, however, quite primitive methods of land cultivation are still used. One of the country's most important resources is the production of rice in fields and terraces. ABOVE: A typical farm scene showing the storage of hay in a stack after harvesting. In front, a "tartanilla," a horse-drawn carriage.

Headquarters are still needed, as well as experts in the various fields. Such an initiative, however, born of life, following the guidelines of the Second Vatican Council and carried out in the spirit of the Movement, cannot fail to be helped by "Divine Providence." The necessary people and means to make this happen will come. And it seemed that here in the Philippines the ground is best suited to house a center of study and of life, a center which could hold unforeseen developments in the evangelization of the Asian continent.

Manila, January 19

Ten years after my last visit to Manila, I found the city more or less the same, only more noisy and crowded. From its three million inhabitants in 1970, the population has grown to six million (eight million including the surrounding suburbs) in 1980. The "jeepneys" have greatly multiplied. The residential areas have expanded, and there is a wide strip of land alongside the bay which has been reclaimed from the sea and used for festivals, exhibitions and international fairs.

The number of big, air-conditioned buildings has increased, but so has the number of countless shacks and huts which, though less conspicuously, are still crowded in the center and along the outskirts of the city.

It would be superfluous to repeat what has been said time and again about the social contrasts, about the Tondo district, about the martial law enforced up until last year. We need only follow the itinerary of Pope John Paul II which gave priority to the poor, the refugees, the sick, to catch a glimpse of the socio-economic situation of the country, and to focus on the immense task entrusted to the Church in the field of human rights and in the fulfillment of God's plan for this people.

Here is the testing ground not only for the good will of the industrial countries, but also — and above all — for the capacity to embrace a lifestyle based on the evangelical message right here in the middle of Asia. It is a hope that can be fulfilled only when the human person is placed at the center of interest and of all plans for development; it is a hope that must be nurtured day by day, against every temptation of discouragement.

In the diocesan weekly of Manila, the same issue that dedicated a full page to "Chiara Lubich, Apostle of Unity," a group of Maryknoll missionaries denounces the attempts underway to transform the socio-political system of Southeast Asia into forms of government based on the principle of "national security." We know to what kind of abuse this doctrine has led in South America, where the bishops have deplored it in official documents, denouncing the more

1) See inside back cover. 2) The Templeton Prize For Progress in Religion was awarded to Chiara Lubich in 1977. 3) See inside back cover. 4) The official name of the Focolare Movement. 5) The annual summer gatherings of the Focolare Movement all over the world. 6) See inside back cover.

ABOVE: Tagaytay. Cardinal Jaime Sin, Archbishop of Manila, with Chiara Lubich during a meeting of bishops - friends of the Movement. Left, Bishop Hemmerle of Aachen, Germany and Guido Mirti, national director of the men's branch of the Movement. Right, Giovanna Vernuccio, national director of the women's branch.

RIGHT: Chiara Lubich at the Mariapolis Center with the focolarini of Manila, Cebu, Hong Kong, Taipei and Bangkok.

or less overt supression of human rights carried out in the name of a feared Marxist take-over.

We were, therefore, in a land of great promise, but also one of great imbalance. Here, the Church's role is of primary importance given the numeric strength of the Catholic population (83 percent of the total), and their capacity to influence the country's choices for the future. They can contribute greatly toward improving not only the quality of life, but also the quality of those entrusted with social and political responsibility.

Tagaytay, January 23

Thirty bishops who are friends of the Movement, and who had come from various dioceses in Asia, concluded on this day a meeting in Tagaytay. It proved to be a new experience which was welcomed with deep appreciation by all who participated.

BELOW: At St. Augustine College, Chiara Lubich addresses 3,000 members and friends of the Movement representing the much larger community of the Movement scattered over the Philippine Archipelago. NEXT PAGE: A glimpse of the Convention Hall of the Development Academy of the Philippines during the gathering for about 1,000 core members of the Movement.

After the five annual meetings at the Mariapolis Center of Rocca di Papa, Italy, and two meetings held in Brazil, it was decided to offer the same opportunity to the bishop-friends of the Movement in the Far East.

The co-ordinator of these encounters, Bishop Klaus Hemmerle, bishop of Aachen, Germany, explained to us the particular nature of this initiative, which the Holy Father has encouraged and followed with great interest. "It is not a matter of joining a Movement," Bishop Hemmerle said, "but of sharing its spirituality." This year the themes focused on the genesis and nature of the spirit of unity in the experience of the Movement and in the personal thoughts of its foundress, Chiara Lubich.

Bishops from Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Korea and other countries were present. The Apostolic Nuncio of the Philippines, Archbishop Bruno Torpigliani and the Archbishop of Manila, Cardinal Jaime Sin, also participated in different parts of the meeting. Chiara Lubich gave her testimony in two much appreciated talks.

All the participants, who expressed the hope of making this experience a yearly event, were convinced to have found in the spirituality of the Movement a special instrument for the evangelization of Asia.

Manila, January 24

The huge gym of St. Augustine College was filled to capacity, but the people still kept coming. Although the invitation had been limited to a certain number of "friends" of the Movement, the crowd continued to grow to about 3,000 people, with several hundred unable to get in.

This vast Philippine community — in its numeric strength and varied composition — reflects the multiplicity of peoples and backgrounds to which the spirituality of the Movement has spread.

On old, rickety buses, they had come up from the deep south of Mindanao Island and from the extreme north of Luzon Island, some from the islands of Palwan, Romblon, Leyte, Negros, Panay, Cebu and Samar. Among them were a good number of the most exploited laborers in the Philippines, the workers of the sugarcane plantations. Factory workers and executives from the beer brewery of San Miguel were there, as were former jail inmates of Muntinglupa alongside policemen and employees of Manila's City Hall — where 900 out of its 3,000 employees take part in the Movement's activities. Even the Manila fire department was amply represented, as was the medical personnel of various hospitals; there were parish groups, well-off city dwellers, and those coming from the most destitute areas. Several families who had emigrated years ago to the United States made a return visit for the occasion. There were religious, priests, seminarians, and four bishops.

So far on this trip, we had not yet seen a meeting with such variety of vocations, nationalities, races, occupations and social classes represented. A numerous group had come from Thailand with Bishop Samanchit and with the focolarine from Bangkok. Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao with Bishop Da Costa, Malaysia, Korea, Japan and the island of Guam were also represented.

It is difficult to give a complete picture of those who attended, but just the same, it would be of little use. Anyone coming to the meeting for the first time would indeed have found it hard to identify the social classes or places of origin of all those present. One characteris-

tic stood out stronger and clearer than any other: the sense of belonging to one family where the communion of spiritual and material goods had created an ideal brotherhood — a sign and promise of a better society.

"It is true that the Philippine people, still young as an independent nation, has many problems to solve as, for instance, the social problem. But what a spiritual wealth there is!" said Chiara at the opening of her most welcomed talk. She defined Catholicism in the Philippines as "a spiritual oil well," a gold mine of resources and energy to be put at the service of all Asia. She then pointed to the supreme means for fulfilling such a task, recalling the words of St. Paul proposed as February's "word of life": "For the weak I made myself weak. I made myself all things to all men in order to save some at any cost."

From the natural resources of the Philippine countryside, Chiara took the image of the bamboo which, under the blasts of the wind, bends without ever breaking, just as we, in our dealings with every neighbor, must never break charity, but always bend in love and unity with the other. "I saw the banana plant," she said. "When the fruit is ripe, the tree dies. And I remembered Jesus. He prepared his apostles, his disciples, and all those close to him very well, and then he died for them . . . If we love one another like this — remembering the example of the bamboo sticks and the banana tree — the Risen Lord will remain here with us."

On the strength of her recent experience in Japan, Chiara invited everyone to develop a deeper knowledge of the other faiths. This could be facilitated by the new school planned in Tagaytay, which has already received the blessing of the Cardinal of Manila. The true key, however, that can open the door to the spreading of the Gospel in Asia, cannot but be Christ himself. He, the Risen Lord, present in our midst, can bring the light of the Resurrection to all the peoples of Asia who either do not believe, or have a faith different from ours.

Chiara also announced the opening of a new Center of spiritual formation for the priests of Asia, which had been long desired by the bishop-friends of the Movement, and which has been heartily encouraged by Cardinal Sin, Archbishop of Manila.

Chiara's stirring address was often interrupted by long, thunderous applause, expressing everyone's full commitment to bear witness to the Gospel before the non-Christian world, and to contribute in the most generous way possible towards the construction of these centers so necessary for the evangelization of the Asiatic continent.

The final words and blessing of the four bishops closed the encounter which will certainly remain an unforgettable event for all who were present. It had marked a milestone in the Movement's development in Asia.

The exhortations and prayers of Pope John Paul II during his trip here barely a year ago came readily to mind in the hope that all of this might already be an answer to his prayers.

Before the two-and-a -half billion people who live on this part of the globe, barely 70 million are Christians, and 45 million of them live in the Philippines. But if what we experienced here was a reality, the fire that Jesus himself has lit in the heart of Asia will never be extinguished.

Many young people look at Asia as a world still rich in spiritual values which must be cultivated and protected, known and loved. This is the first goal of the New Centers of the Movement now being opened in Hong Kong, Korea and in the Philippines.

On leaving Manila, Chiara entrusted this new task primarily to the gen — the gen of the whole world — to launch everywhere an operation called "The Hour of Asia." We will hear more about this in the months to come, and we can be sure that, with their work and commitment, there will be many new developments capable of making Asia the spiritual heart of humanity.

SPECIAL

AUSTRALIA
Variety and Unity

by ENZO FONDI

The fifth stage in a long voyage throughout the Far East and to Oceania. The young Australian nation, rich in religious and cultural heritages, reveals an innate readiness to receive the Gospel invitation to unity through love.

Melbourne, January 29

The hot sun of the Australian summer, the limpid skies streaked with clouds, the wide city streets shaded over by trees — these were our first impressions of Australia as we landed, very drowsy from the long flight that had carried us way below the equator.

There is something that the mild zones of the southern hemisphere, have in common, something due not only to climate or geographical position. This impression was confirmed first by a focolarino[1] from Argentina, now in Australia for several years, and then by another one, originally from South Africa.

Here, one finds a less rigid, more informal atmosphere, a spirit that is younger and more open than that of "old" Europe.

Melbourne: Sixty-two miles in diameter, a sea of little houses set in a vast expanse of green, a city of three million inhabitants. It was here that the first Focolare Center in Australia was opened fourteen years ago. Today, the newest Center is found in Perth, almost 2,500 miles away, on the western edge of the continent.

While the annual meeting of the focolarini was starting, a bus from Perth had already been traveling two days, bringing sixty people for the larger meeting to be held on Sunday.

I met Mark, a gen[2] I had not seen for many years. He is a movie director now, shooting a film in the national park of Hanging Rock. For him, as well as for everyone we met, the feeling was one of a deep, contained joy: this long-awaited, hoped-for event finally was coming true. Certainly, at the end of a long trip throughout Asia, the possibility of a visit to Australia could not but be uncertain, but the moment had arrived. Surely it was in the plans of God to discover the countenance of the Work of Mary[3] here, too, on the point furthest from Rome, on the other side of the world.

Melbourne, January 31

"It is not necessary to ask you if you are happy, because the joy is shining on your faces," with these words, Archbishop Frank Little of Melbourne began the concelebrated Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral for the 750 participants in a gathering called on the occasion of Chiara Lubich's visit to Australia, and which would follow in the diocesan hall.

Remembering his various encounters with the Movement in Australia and Europe, at Loppiano[4], Rocca di Papa and Frascati, the Archbishop summarized his impressions in one word: Love. That kind of love which makes you feel at home, in the house of the Father, that binds many in one family. And then joy: a joy that overflows to those who meet people living the spirituality of the Movement. "Here there is a new freedom," the Archbishop continued, "in the spirit of the Gospel: a freedom which is not mere submission to that which is asked of us, nor is it the identifica-

Ministry of Tourism, Government of Victoria

LEFT: Sixty-two miles wide, Melbourne is mostly made up of one-family homes surrounded by parks and trees. Only in the heart of the city have modern sky-scrapers been built; most Australians prefer family-size homes. BELOW: Members and friends of the Movement — Australians, New Zealanders, Tasmanians, and Polynesians — say goodbye to Chiara and other leaders of the Work of Mary at the end of their visit to Melbourne.

tion with a leadership; rather it is something that comes from the depths of the soul and which, in the depths of the soul, is accepted."

Archbishop Little mentioned the fruits of the Holy Spirit as he referred to the personal experience of those who share in the life of the Movement. It is a life based on love, which generates goodness, truthfulness, kindness, self-control . . . "To say," he concluded, "that the gift of the Holy Spirit is abundantly known and lived, can be another way to affirm that Jesus is in our midst."

Members of the Movement from all over Australia and New Zealand had been invited to this one-day "Mini-Mariapolis." The group from furthest away had come from Perth, while others had arrived from Wellington in New Zealand, from Tasmania, Sydney, Canberra, Adelaide, Griffith.

Recalling the historic trip made by Pope Paul VI to Australia,

Chiara Lubich repeated the definition of the Church which he had given during his visit to this very country: "The Church is love, the Church is unity." She entrusted to the members of the Movement the task of fulfilling these words, so as to contribute to the unity of the Church and of Christians in Australia. The foundress of the Focolare Movement highlighted the rich promise offered by the very composition of the young Australian society, a people of varying ethnic backgrounds, religions and cultures, and characterized by an innate readiness to receive the Gospel message inviting all to unity through love.

Chiara called to mind the words of Mary McKillop (Mother Mary of the Cross), a Sister who in the last century began a typically Australian religious order dedicated to helping both the poor and the abandoned children of the "bush." Mother Mary of the Cross had written, "I experience joy when things go well, as when everything seems to go badly . . . For me, the will of God is a precious book which I never tire of reading, and which always contains some new marvel."

Today, too, Chiara said, these words invite all to fulfill the specific plan which God has for each person, as well as for the whole Australian nation, so as to introduce everyone to the always new "marvels" of a life lived for unity.

"When our Christian lives don't bear fruit," Chiara noted, "we should not think that this is due to the absence of good will on the part of individuals, nor that the action of grace is lacking. In reality, the fact is that the spiritual potential in each person — present we could say to use an example, like one pole of electric current — does not come into contact with that of the others. There is no

SPECIAL

A BRIEF HISTORY OF A NEW CONTINENT

When the first navigators during the 16th century rounded Cape Horn and ventured out onto the high seas of the Pacific, the strong winds coming up from the South Pole pushed them past Australia and on towards Polynesia. Others set sail from India, but they too failed to catch sight of the continent. And so it remained undiscovered, for almost two centuries, even though some — including De Queiros from Portugal — suspected that an immense land lay somewhere south of the islands of Java and Timor. He had even given it a name which, if not an actual christening, at least suggested the hope of a special protection; he called it "The Land of the Holy Spirit."

Other navigators, including Tasman, Dick Hartog and some English pirates, continued to land on different points of the continent, but it was not until the 1770 landing of Captain Cook in Botany Bay that this small continent — and largest island of the world — was officially discovered. Captain Arthur Phillip's landing in 1788 would mark the beginning of colonization in Australia.

The "forefathers," so to speak, of this new land would come from England's overflowing prisons: convicts shipped to the opposite end of the earth to populate a colony from which they would never escape.

The Birth of the Church

One third of those aboard the "First Fleet" arriving in Sydney Harbor with Captain Phillip, was Catholic but in 1790, when the mass deportations of Irish prisoners began, the number of Catholics suddenly swelled. Thus began the hard life of a poor community of exiled patriots and common prisoners.

In 1800, an Irish priest named Father Dixon, was deported following the Irish rebellion of 1789 and on May 15, 1803, he cele-

ABOVE: The kangaroo caught in mid-leap. Like the emu, another animal typical o this continent, the kangaroo has been chosen for the Australian coat-of-arms be cause it can only go forward. Also this can have a symbolic meaning for those wh understand it and live it.

brated the first Mass in Australia: a deported priest, a community of exiled parishoners, vestments made of old curtains, a chalice fashioned out of tin. Permission to celebrate Mass was withdrawn, and no Masses were said in Australia until the illegal entry of another Irish priest, Father Flynn in 1817. Before his arrest and return to Ireland, he consecrated a Host, depositing it in the home of one of the laity. There would become the only place of worship, the center of religious life for the Catholic community in Australia.

The first priests to arrive "legally" came in 1820 and began their work among the outcasts of society, the convicts, going back and forth between the prisons and places of execution.

Already in 1894, there were 700,000 faithful, one cardinal, five archbishops, twenty-six bishops, 1,000 priests, 2,806 sisters and 906 Catholic schools.

The only ones to work with the native inhabitants of Australia, the aborgines, were the missionaries. However, all their efforts to protect the aborigines from the merciless hand of the "civilized" world, as well as from the sicknesses brought in by the white man, did not suffice. Of 300,000 aborigines who for more than 30,000 years had lived on the continent, only some tens of thousands remained; a much reduced population, barely integrated, but defended by laws and humanitarian institutions.

Present-Day Situation of Catholicism in Australia

The Apostolic Pronuncio Luigi Barbarito told us that in the last twenty years, the considerable influx of immigrants to Australia has increased the number of Catholics by 1 million.

ABOVE: One of the aborigines of Australia is showing samples of their paintings on bark. Thirty thousand years ago, the aborigine population was comprised of approximately 300,000 natives. Today, they number in the tens of thousands and remain but little integrated into Australian society. The only group which has worked to protect the interests of the aborigines has been that of the missionaries.

This has created problems in welfare, education and integration, problems which the local Church has confronted with a profound sense of responsibility through Catholic organizations. Among its many initiatives, it also has offered immigrants assistance in the form of a loan to help pay the cost of the trip. It has been an enormous undertaking which still bears fruits as new generations are integrated into Australian society. Problems remain, however, for the elderly who adapt with more difficulty to the new country with its different traditions and customs.

In order to avoid the formation of ethnic ghettos, parishes have not followed the lines of language or culture. With the help of military chaplains, it has been possible to assist the immigrant in the essential process of insertion into society.

The strong point of the Church's charitable and educative activities has been the Catholic school system which, from the first half of the 19th century, has been defended and sustained by laity and hierarchy alike.

Today there are approximately 100 Catholic hospitals furnished with modern equipment, and some, including St. Vincent in Melbourne, and those of Sydney and Brisbane, are considered to be among the best in the country.

The Church counts now among 2,300 diocesan priests, 1,000 religious, 12,000 sisters, and 2,000 lay religious. There is no crisis in vocations here; rather, there are clear signs of a renewal which gives great hope for the future of pastoral care in Australia.

Today, Catholics comprise 25 percent of the population and, next to the Anglicans (30 percent), they are the largest Christian denomination in the country. In addition, there are large communities of Baptists, the "Uniting Church" (churches on the way to union) composed of Presbyterians, Methodists and Congregationalists. A large Greek community gives life to the growing Orthodox Church.

One of the unique ecumenical developments here is the participation of the Catholic Church of Melbourne in the Council of Churches of the State of Victoria, the local branch of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Geneva.

Left: Archbishop Francis Little delivers the homily at the Mass concelebrated at St. Patrick's Cathedral with Archbishop Francis Carrol of Wagga Wagga and twelve priests of the Movement.

BELOW: Melbourne: Another moment during the "Mini-Mariapolis" which had drawn together 750 members of the Movement, a partial representation of the thousands scattered throughout Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific islands, who share in the spirituality of the Movement.

ABOVE RIGHT: Some of the bishops invited by Archbishop Frank Little, bishop of Melbourne, to a meeting at the Archbishop's residence: Left, Auxiliary Bishop John Kelly of Melbourne; center, Archbishop Francis Carrol of Wagga Wagga. In the foreground, Chiara Lubich. Also present were Pronuncio Luigi Barbarito, Bishop Ronald Mulkearns of Ballarat, Auxiliary Bishop Eric Perkins of Melbourne. Four pastors from city parishes, who are members of the Movement, had also been personally invited by the Archbishop and participated in the gathering. At the conclusion, Pronuncio Barbarito, speaking on behalf of his fellow bishops, thanked Archbishop Little for the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of this spiritual and ecclesial experience so in tune with the spirit and aims of the Second Vatican Council.

communion; therefore, there is no light which shines forth only from the encounter in Christ which gives life to the presence of the Risen Lord in our midst."

In 1988 Australia will celebrate its 200th Anniversary, and Pope John Paul II has been invited. "We should work at adding a special reason to rejoice to the many already existing on such an occasion," Chiara Lubich told the many members and friends of the Movement. "It should be a purely spiritual reason. Only six years remain before this anniversary, but they should be six years in which the efforts, prayers and development of all the activities and branches of the Focolare Movement truly contribute to making more visible and real, more authentic and verifiable the identification of the Church as a communion of love, a sign of unity." Her words were received with a unanimous consensus on the part of those present.

Chiara Lubich meeting with some Australian Gen 3, at the beginning of the meeting with the community. ▷

The final words of Archbishop Francis Carrol, bishop of Wagga Wagga, confirmed the meaning of the gathering, "The unity presented this morning as a goal to be strived for is a demanding one, but it is also our 'birthright' as Catholics, as Christians, as members of the great human family. This unity which we will try to live in the families, in religious communities, in the dioceses, in the factories, can be a great blessing for our country . . . . It is a goal that Christ can help us reach, if he is present in our midst with that bond that unites all."

Melbourne, February 3

At the conclusion of her visit, Chiara, together with a group of focolarini, was invited by Archbishop Frank Little to a meeting at the archbishop's residence in Melbourne. Present were the Apostolic Pronuncio Archbishop Luigi Barbarito, and four Australian bishops. At the request of the Archbishop, Chiara outlined the fundamental points of the spirituality of the Movement, a spirituality clearly aiming at being an

The message given by Chiara to the Australian community was met with an immediate consensus and concrete commitments. Some of the groups attending the meeting came from Perth, 2,500 miles away, from the island of Futuna in Melanesia, as well as from New Zealand, Tasmania and New Calcedonia.

answer to the demands of today's world and at promoting ecclesial initiatives of evangelical renewal in the spirit of unity. She underlined how each member of the Movement strives "to learn the sublime art of not 'extinguishing' the presence of Jesus in the midst, but rather, each strives to generate his presence, as Pope Paul VI had said, so that he might be the source of an always new fruitfulness in the life of the Church."

An informal conversation followed which highlighted the great interest that the spirituality of the Focolare has raised in many leaders of various Christian Churches. Bishops of Anglican, Lutheran and Orthodox Churches have expressed the desire to meet with representatives of the Catholic hierarchy, in order to reach a greater personal, pastoral and theological communion, following the format of the meetings held regularly by the Catholic bishops who are friends of the Movement.

Melbourne, February 4:

Two hours before departure, in a brief, unplanned meeting with the focolarini of Australia and New Zealand, Chiara summarized the meaning of the trip which was drawing near to its conclusion.

Different images, each of a symbolic value, had marked the most important events along the way. They represented steps of a spiritual journey which had borne very concrete fruits, and to which the circumstances and geographical surroundings had provided the setting.

Japan — with its many gifts from our Buddhist brothers — reminded us of the unexpected appearance of those wise Orientals who had gone to adore Jesus, the King born in Bethlehem. Non-Christians too should be welcomed into our family, around the 'crib' of Jesus in our midst. This was what we derived from the experience with our Japanese brothers, an experience which marked the beginning of new developments in the dialogue with people belonging to the great religions.

Korea suggested the image of the Work of Mary formed like a tree with the branches joined to one another and to the trunk, symbol of the presence of Jesus in our midst: an image which can become reality through the inner dynamism of a life of unity.

In Hong Kong, the organization of the Movement in the "cluster format" became even clearer. This makes each member responsible for the spiritual development of others — for whom he or she should be like a life-giving branch.

Nature in the Philippines, particularly with the example of bamboo sticks and their characteristic flexibility and wide number of uses, reinforced our commitment to "bend," in order to make ourselves "one" with all, following Jesus' example, of whom St. Paul said: "he emptied himself and took the form of a slave . . . " (Phil. 2:7).

Even the banana plant that "dies" as it bears fruit proved to be a meaningful allegory on how to love one's neighbor.

And finally, Australia, with its variety and unity, with the simplicity and brotherhood of its people, reminded us of a sentence from the earliest days of the Movement, "If all people, or at least a handful of them, were true servants of God in their neighbor, soon the world would belong to Christ."

A "soon" with a prophetic note, but here on the other side of the world from where the Movement first began, one can somehow see signs of it in realizing that the prayer made by the first focolarine of Trent on an October Sunday in 1946 has been answered: "Ask of me and I will give you the nations for an inheritance and the ends of the earth for your possession," (Ps. 2:8). It is not to boast that we say today that over the Work of Mary — born in those years, which wishes to be "the kingdom of Jesus in the midst" of those united in his name — the sun never sets.

1,2) See inside back cover. 3) Official name of the Focolare Movement. 4) A small city built by the Focolare Movement near Florence, Italy.

BUDDHISM TODAY

As mentioned in our previous issue, we are publishing here an interview with Father Marcello Zago, adviser to the Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions.

Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Nepal. . . places which have appeared in the reports of guerrilla warfare, of refugees adrift in flimsy fishing boats. . .

Now, however, you meet more frequently the Orientals, "masters" of meditation in the West; thus they have brought closer to the Western world the religious world of Asia known more in its exotic aspects than in its spiritual depths.

"East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet," wrote Kipling, a writer of the late Victorian era. His was a pessimistic view, typical of the learned literature of his time which ignored the Oriental world altogether.

But what does coexistence with Western Christians mean to the Buddhist peoples? Is an encounter between these two worlds really impossible?

We have asked Father Marcello Zago, a scholar of Buddhism, who spent approximately twenty years in Laos with the task of exploring the possible ways of an encounter with this religion. The picture he gave us is drawn largely from his personal experience.

Q. The great variety of currents existing in Buddhism would tend to suggest a certain comparison with the divisions that have taken place among Christians. Do you think there is any similarity?

A. Bascially, I would say — no, there isn't. First of all, Buddhism, unlike Christianity, does not have divine revelation, nor dogmas; it does not have anything comparable to the Magisterium of the Church. It doesn't ask for an external ex-

Saigon, Vietnam. A Buddhist girl praying in the main pagoda. The Marxist regime had ordered the almost total closing of monasteries and pagodas. Faced with modern ideologies linked to science, laicism and socialism, Buddhism today finds itself in the position of having to evaluate and affirm its identity anew.

BELOW: The tea ceremony, at which the Hisamatsu, revered master of the Zen cult in Kyoto, officates. In Buddhism, the most common acts may be a step toward spiritual development. FAR RIGHT: The Buddhist temple of Asakusa in Japan. Before entering, the faithful light small sticks of incense in the great brazier placed in front of the entrance.

pression of conversion. It is primarily oriented towards salvation, seeking above all to be a moral code leading to total liberation from all that is worldly, transitory, miserable and inconsistent.

Buddhism is a universal as well as a missionary movement, but it differs from the other universal religions such as Christianity or Islam not only in its principles, but also in its practice.

Buddhists are convinced that the teaching of Buddha is valid for everybody. The "Four Noble Truths"[1] are accepted by all the different schools as the heart of the Buddhist religion; the "Three Jewels" (Buddha, the doctrine and the community), are therefore highly venerated, and meditation — even by those who do not practice it — is recognized as having a fundamental value. These main points, however, have not prevented Buddhism from preserving the pre-existing, non-Buddhist religion of the various ethnic groups in every country it has reached. The Buddhist missionary proclaims the truth of Buddha, but does not oppose the various beliefs and superstitions which, he believes, will fall by themselves as, step-by-step, the people advance on the way of enlightenment.

This explains the many existing varieties of Buddhism. Every country has more or less its "own" form mixed with elements of animism, or Shintoism or Hinduism with the cult of the spirits, of the ancestors. . .

Q. But can this mixture of different religions still be called Buddhism?

A: Yes, it can be because, although the many different forms coexist, they nevertheless are all subordinate to Buddha. He remains always above the smaller divinities who do not offer final salvation. These smaller gods offer well-being or protection here on earth — needs which are felt by all.

The bonze (Buddhist monk) enjoys the highest position among all the specialists of the sacred, both in receiving help as well as in social prestige. The pagoda, built in stone, is a spiritual center dominating the shrines dedicated to the spirits, which usually are made of wood and are small, temporary and unstable. Thus, the moral aspect has priority over the worldly aspects of life as, for example, salvation is more important than health. It certainly is not easy to keep this kind of balance between the two elements.

Q: Has the emphasis on the spiritual — on detachment from all worldly things — provoked resistance on the part of the laity or of civil authorities?

A: No, exactly the opposite has happened, at least as long as the Asiatic countries have kept their political and cultural identities. Because of its characteristic attitude of tolerance, Buddhism was able to adapt and immerse itself into every kind of cultural environment. An inseparable part of cultural life in the Orient, in fact, is the religious element.

From the very beginning of Buddhism, the relationship between the monks and the laity has been interdependent: while the laity had need of the monks for their spiritual education, the monks had need of the laity for their material support, for which the laity derived merit towards salvation.

The civil authorities entered into this relationship with the religious world, either because they were sincere Buddhists or because

had they not done so, they would have lost control over the people. It was convenient both for the monks as for the heads of state to declare Buddhism the official state religion. Consequently, there is a Buddhist identity which is both religious and civil. With the separation of the civil from the religious world, both fell prey to decadence — as was the case during, as well as before, the colonial era.

Speaking about more recent times, it was exactly in the countries where the Theravada tradition (which has a more pronounced monastic character) prevailed that Buddhism became a powerful force for independence. In Cambodia, we know, Sihanouk attempted to formulate a "Buddhist" socialism in opposition to the forms of atheistic socialism. Sihanouk himself spent some time as a bonze, as did U Thant, from Burma, before he assumed his task as Secretary General to the United Nations. It is customary among lay people in the Theravada tradition to spend at least one period of one's life in the monastic state.

At present the Buddhist-inspired political projects meet with little enthusiasm, with the exception of Japan where the Soka Gakkai sect has its own party, called Komiko, which is the third political power in the country.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE MODERN WORLD

Q: What effect does the present advance of Marxism, as well as the influence of Western technology, have on Buddhism in these countries?

A: In Asia, secularization is not expressed in the same way as it is in the West. Certainly, though, the closing down of almost all monasteries and pagodas in the Communist countries, the decline of traditional animist religiosity due to scientific progress, the phenomenon of urbanization — all this has provoked a crisis in Buddhism as a socio-religious movement. Now its identity has to be re-verified and presented anew.

There where Buddhism was more integrated into the social aspect of life, people's attitude is different. The rural masses, less influenced by modern developments, conserve their religious attachments more or less as in the past. In the cities, on the other hand, and especially among the young, only a minority still adheres to Buddhism, supports the bonzes, or takes active part in the associations. The majority accepts Buddhism as a cultural dimension without really relating the doctrine to everyday life. And finally, another minority finds no sense whatsoever in religion and, in particular, none in Buddhism.

In the countries not under Communist rule and which belong to the Mahayana tradition where Buddhism is less integrated into the local culture, there is a liberal attitude towards religion, as can be seen in Japan.

Q: What is the situation of Buddhism in Japan today?

A: Since the postwar period, over 700 new religious sects, founded mostly by lay people, have been officially recognized. Nevertheless, only very few Japanese — no more than 20 percent — profess a religion. Yet, most of the remaining 80 percent who claim to belong to no religion whatsoever, have actually very deep religious feelings. It is a religiosity that lies somewhere between the experience of the divine dimension in nature and the search for the meaning of life. Meditation is practiced more and more, even with no religious connotation, as a means to find interior peace amidst the tensions of modern-day life.

If we look at Zen Buddhism, we see that it focuses primarily on the various forms of meditation which, however, are influenced by Japanese culture, for example by its sense of beauty. In all Zen meditation centers there are images of nature, sign of harmony. One of the ways to approach God, according, to Japanese tradition is, in fact, this sense of the cosmos.

The modern forms of Buddhism have re-discovered the need for "the other"; therefore, we are able to perceive in it together with ancient Buddhism, the influence of traditional religion — Shintoism — as well as of Christianity.

BUDDHIST AND CHRISTIAN ECUMENISM

Q: Are Buddhists open to ecumenism?

A: There is an ecumenical movement within Buddhism itself, and this too is a sign of renewal.

The first initiative was taken in 1947 by lay people who decided to invite Buddhists from all over the world to a World Congress held in Colombo. After that, such meetings have been held every two years in various cities of Asia. These developments have taken on

The Dalai Lama, highest religious and civil authority of Tibet. Since 1959, after his country was invaded by China, he took refuge in India. Temporal power, one of the new elements with respect to the origins of Buddhism, characterizes Lamaistic Buddhism today.

even greater momentum following the Fifth Buddhist Council in Rangoon, in 1958, when the 2500th Anniversary of the enlightenment of Buddha was commemorated.

This ecumenism helps overcome the doctrinal divisions and the prejudices existing among the different schools. It also encourages mutual assistance, primarily of a religious, but of a social nature as well. The Japanese Buddhists, for instance, have given substantial aid to Laos and to other Buddhist countries on their way to development.

The dialogue between Buddhism and Christianity, on the other hand, is still very limited, also because Christians are a tiny minority in Asia: 0.3 percent in Japan, 2.5 percent in all of Asia. If we were not to count the Philippines, the total would hardly reach 1 percent.

There are, nevertheless, many signs of an opening: there have been official contacts through the meetings of the Bishops' Conferences with Buddhist leaders, as well as more informal ones like the presence of a Buddhist monk at the ordination of a priest, or at a local parish feast, and so on. Representatives of the various Buddhist movements are always invited to participate in all kinds of social activities.

A deeper level of mutual understanding is sought also through sessions, for example, on Buddhist meditation so as to come to know it well from within. I recall that in 1974, in Laos, we held a session with Christians and Buddhists, focusing on Christian and Buddhist meditation. This was possible because there was an experience behind it. Encounters such as these lead to contacts on a higher level: between the Pope and the Buddhist Patriarch of Laos, the Patriarch of Thailand, and leaders of Japanese Buddhism, etc.

Q: Which are the main obstacles to a dialogue between Christians and Buddhists?

A: The Christian world has had, in general, many difficulties in meeting the Buddhist world. The first Franciscan missionaries, around 1200-1300, returned full of enthusiasm over the many things they had found Christianity and Buddhism to have in common. Even Marco Polo had written that if Buddhists were Christian, they would be great saints. In the following years, however, there arose misunderstandings due to the doctrine and its philosophical interpretations. The dialogue is particularly difficult if held in abstract terms. There is such an enormous difference between their categories of thought and cultural attitudes and our own, that misunderstandings are inevitable. In the past, these difficulties led missionaries to detach themselves from the Buddhist world and to limit their involvement primarily to the animists.

Now, however, especially after Vatican II, we can see a new awakening. We have at least learned that

(continued on page 28)

WORD OF LIFE

"You are clean
already,
thanks to the word
I have spoken
to you."
(John 15:3)

The word makes us live.

The word makes us free.

The word guarantees happiness.

The word converts.

The word purifies us.

The word draws us to our specific vocations.

The word brings forth the hatred of the world and the sanctity of the disciple.

The word makes us see the truth.

The word brings comfort.

The word gives us joy.

The word produces works.

The word gives wisdom.

The word preserves us from human concerns.

The word obtains everything.

The word brings about union with God.

The word gives us hope of eternal life.

The word makes us one.

The word changes one's mentality.

The word makes each soul a heaven.

"You are clean already, thanks to the word I have spoken to you." (John 15:3)

When the disciples heard Jesus speak these encouraging words with such decision, their hearts must have leapt for joy.

How wonderful it would be if Jesus could say these words to us as well!

In order that we might be worthy of them in some small measure, let us try to understand what they mean.

Jesus made this affirmation in the context of his well-known example of the vine and the branches. He had explained that he is the true vine and the Father is the vinegrower who cuts off those branches that are barren and trims clean each branch that bears fruit so that it will yield even more. Having said this, he declared:

"You are clean already, thanks to the word I have spoken to you."

"You are clean already . . . " What does Jesus mean with these words, what kind of purity is he speaking of? He is referring to the attitude one needs to have in order to stay in the presence of God, to the absence of obstacles (such as sin, for instance) which come between us and any contact with the sacred, any encounter with the divine.

To possess this purity, we need God's help. In the Old Testament, people had already discovered that human beings are unable to approach God if they rely on human strength alone. God must purify their hearts, he must give them a new heart. There is a beautiful Psalm that says, "A clean heart create in me, O God" (Ps. 51:12).

"You are clean already, thanks to the word I have spoken to you."

According to Jesus, there is a way to be pure of heart, and it is his word. The disciples had heard and accepted his word and it had purified them.

The words of Jesus, in fact, are not like human words. Jesus is present in them as he is present in the Eucharist, though in a different way. Through his words, Christ enters us, and by accepting them and putting them into practice, we allow him to be born and to grow in our hearts.

Pope Paul VI said: "How does Jesus become present in souls? Through the communication of the word, the divine thought is conveyed, the Word, the Son of God made man, is conveyed. We could assert that the Lord becomes incarnate in us when we allow his word to come and dwell within us."[1]

"You are clean already, thanks to the word I have spoken to you."

The word of Jesus is also compared to a seed sown in the heart of the believer. When it is welcomed, it penetrates deeply, and like a seed, it develops, grows and bears much fruit; it "Christifies" us, making us similar to Christ.

The word, which has thus entered a person's life through the power of the Spirit, truly has the ability and strength to keep the Christian far from evil: that is, as long as we allow the word to act in us, we will be free from sin and, therefore, pure. We will sin only if we cease to obey the truth.

"You are clean already, thanks to the word I have spoken to you."

(continued on page 28)

LC TIE LINE throughout the world

10,000 VINEYARDS

The LCTIE LINE of this issue offers to our readers some thoughts that Chiara Lubich shared recently in a conversation with members of the Movement. They are printed here together with news of the Movement all over the world.

Recently, the gen of Fontem sent me an excerpt from the writings of Papias, an Apostolic Father from the early centuries of the Church. He remains somewhat of a mysterious figure. He reports these words which he would attribute to Jesus and which refer to the end of the world. He says, "A time will come when new vineyards will spring forth. In each vineyard there will be 10,000 vines; each vine will have 10,000 branches; each branch will have 10,000 offshoots; each offshoot, 10,000 clusters; and each cluster, 10,000 grapes. Each grape, when pressed, will yield twenty-five measure of wine. And when a saint will want to take one of these clusters, another cluster will exclaim, "I am better, take me and through me, give praise to the Lord."

What do you think? Aren't these words beautiful? They may or may not be authentic, but we can keep them in mind as a picture of what our Movement ought to be. In fact, everywhere in the Movement these days we see the desire to order our life in "the cluster format," as we say. Each one of us is well inserted in a group animated by the Gospel-like spirituality of the Movement and this helps all to be more committed, to have greater strength and more ardor as we go ahead on the "holy journey"; that is, as we go ahead in the effort of working towards sanctity.

Each one of us is responsible for a group of brothers and sisters whom we want to love by serving and helping, because we know that a person helped by another is like a fortified city.

For this reason, the writing of Papias can help us: it can stimulate us to go ahead in our work, urging us to love with such intensity as to reap very abundant fruits, fruits of sanctity for the glory of of God.

Therefore: "the cluster format." But how can we love "our cluster." How can we serve them in order to serve Christ in them? Perhaps this phrase from the Gospel can help us: "If anyone would serve me, let him follow me; where I am, there will my servant be. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him" (John 12:26).

It is clear, then: in order to serve Jesus, one must follow him. If we want to serve Jesus in those entrusted to us, let us follow him as he wants to be followed; that is, by denying ourselves and taking up our cross.

This is really the best way also to serve our neighbor. It is a way tested by the saints. These authentic followers of Christ often took along with them tens of thousands of people to Jesus. What was their method? They tried to follow Jesus seriously — as he wanted to be followed — and many others followed them. They loved Jesus as he wanted to be loved and he manifested himself to them. They were enlightened in a deeper way about his truth, his doctrine, and they, in turn, enlightened, helped and encouraged their own friends and disciples with this light. They were real "pelicans," so to say, who nourished their followers, their children as true mothers do, giving of their own life and offering together with the genuine Christian doctrine also their own Christian experience. And they were followed by others. This was the secret of their success.

So then, how can we serve our "cluster" from now on? By loving Jesus, following him and offering to those around us — together with our spirituality focusing on the Gospel — also the experience of it lived daily in our own lives.

C.L.

"Harvest time," a detail from a series of frescoes on the months of the year (15th century). Found in the Castle of Good Counsel, Trent, Italy.

Rocca di Papa, Italy

Upon her return home from a trip to Asia and Australia, Chiara Lubich received a number of documents on the World Conference on Religions and Peace (WCRP) which had been sent to her by leaders of the WCRP in different countries throughout the world. They had been informed by the Buddhist lay association, the Rissho Kosei-kai, that the Focolare Movement had expressed the possibility of a collaboration. A committee has been established to study these documents and to suggest names of people in the Movement who could contribute to this work in the different countries.

Ecumenism

In Germany, Bruna Tomasi and Aldo Stedile, national directors of the Movement there, are working at the ecumenical center of Ottmaring to further the dialogue between the Focolare Movement and the Bruderschaft vom Germeinsamen (Brotherhood of Communal Life). Members of the Focolare, together with members of the Bruderschaft began this small city of ecumenical life thirteen years ago.

At present, the Evangelical members of the Focolare in Germany are visiting the authorities of their Church in order to inform them that they are part of the Focolare Movement as Evangelical members and to give them an idea of their numbers and vocations within it.

India

The leaders of the Movement in India, which is at its beginnings there, informed us that for the first time, a one-day gathering was held in Goa on February 27. The 220 participants interested in learning about the Movement had come from different cities. Mass was celebrated by the Patriarch. The atmosphere of the meeting was that of a real "Mariapolis."[1] In India 2,500 people receive the "Word of Life" leaflet and hundreds respond through letters.

1) The annual summer gathering of the Focolare Movement held in many countries throughout the world.

Also Our Lady Has Been a Widow

Compiled by MARIELE QUARTANA

A few contemporary experiences — the best way perhaps to help widows and widowers find the way to model their lives after Mary's example.

A letter from one of our readers, asking a question, prompted the preparation of this article. We felt that her letter demanded more than a simple reply.

"I remained a widow without children," she writes. *"Many times during the day when my loneliness seems to be most acute, I think of Our Lady. She too remained alone after the deaths of St. Joseph and of Jesus. The apostles were with her of course — especially St. John, who had been entrusted with her care by Jesus — but they had their mission to carry out. I'm certain that Mary was the first one to stay as much as possible in the background in order to avoid being an obstacle to what they had to do.*

"My question is simply this: why don't we have any prayers or forms of worship in the Church dedicated especially to Mary as a widow? Mary is very much venerated as Virgin and Mother; we hear a lot about her life with St. Joseph and the Child Jesus in Nazareth. Why have we forgotten about Mary Sorrowful — not so much at the moment when Jesus died and was buried — but during the many years when she was alone, when she found her sole support in God. She probably saw around her other widows who, as they grew older, were surrounded by their children and grandchildren, while perhaps she was a guest of different families, lacking a home of her own. She was certainly cared for with love wherever she went, but did she have that sense of security that comes from having a family of your own?

"I often pray to Mary as a widow, and it would be nice to know more details of her life. I think that other widows could be helped in this way to find once again an example in her that they can follow — the Woman who went through the same experience that they have, who understands them and shows them the way.

"Wouldn't it be worthwhile to bring back into practice the veneration of Mary as a widow?"

Matilda Calvitti

The veneration of Mary as a widow as such does not exist. However, we have to say that in the Hebrew society as described in the Old Testament and in the early Church, widows had a position of honor. This was true almost to the point that the spirit of love of the early Christians was judged according to how they cared for orphans and widows. In fact, the word of mercy most emphasized in the early Christian communities, was the attention given to these groups of people. James the Apostle in his letter equates "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father . . . " with visiting "orphans and widows in their affliction . . . " (Jam. 1:27).

In the Gospel as well, we find widows having a prominent role. Often they are entrusted with important tasks. It would be enough to remember one — Anna, the prophetess.

The saints also gave great value to widowhood, considering it as a very painful state in life, but at the same time, a very privileged one. Some of the wonderful letters of St. Francis de Sales "to the laity" are a profound example of this.

Also the popes have spoken on this subject. To cite one, there is the talk which Pope Paul VI addressed to a group of widows gathered in Lourdes in 1967, in which he compared the widow to the militant Church, who is on her way, awaiting the moment to be united again with her spouse in the next life.

During the Fifth Synod of Bishops in 1980 on the "Role of the Christian Family in Today's World," the subject of widowhood was touched on a number of times.

As far as the New Family Movement[1] is concerned, Chiara Lubich while outlining its program in 1967 when she founded it, spoke at length about widowhood:

"When speaking about marriage, Jesus said, 'What God has joined together, let no man put asunder.' However, at times, it is God himself who separates the two, because he calls either the husband or the wife to himself. The sacrament of matrimony, which had made of the two one flesh, not only physically, but also spiritually, is thus dissolved by the will of God. The widow or widower, remaining like someone who has been broken in two, is the picture of he who cried out: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'

"Our Lady, however, is a model for us. I'm certain that she suffered greatly when St. Joseph died. The fact that she loved God with her whole heart does not mean that she did not love her husband. Who filled the emptiness that Our Lady felt after St. Joseph was gone? Jesus.

"In the same way, the presence of Jesus in our Movement has to be so strong as to fill the emptiness felt by these people. They have great value in the eyes of God, and therefore were treated in a special way by the early Christians."

In the past fourteen years, ever since the New Family Movement came into being, many widows and

Angela Rampini, who here shares her experience, together with Aurelio, the youngest of her five children.

widowers have found a certain support and comfort through their contact with it. And not a few, whether with or without children, have again found a reason for living through their commitment to the community. Also here, we follow Mary's example.

If we read the Gospel carefully, we find many passages where Mary — after St. Joseph's death — is present and active, working with and for others. For example she was at the wedding feast of Cana, when Jesus was surrounded by very many people. We can deduce that she, together with other women, was following her son as he entered his public life.

Mary did not retreat into herself or remain isolated even after the death of Jesus, when she found herself truly alone. She was with the apostles in the Cenacle when the Holy Spirit descended upon them; she participated in the birth of the first Christian community, of the Church.

We could conclude, then, by saying that perhaps one day the Church will institute a form of veneration to Mary as a widow. What we can do now is to help widows and widowers throughout the world — through our witness — to model their lives after Mary's example.

Below are two experiences of a widow and a widower who found the answer to their suffering by trying to live in this way.

"Choose the Flower You Like Most" —

"Yes, Domenico and I got married because we loved one another. We really loved one another very much especially during the last months before his death." Angela was 47 years old when Domencio died unexpectedly during the night of a heart attack. Two of their five children were already married; the youngest, Aurelio, was seven.

"Our relationship had grown steadily deeper over the years . . . The last month, then, was almost like a springtime, that reminded me, in a way, of the beginning of our marriage.

"Domenico was so aware of my needs, so understanding, he showed his love in so many ways that I felt like a young bride. Everything was fresh and new like our first years together. I felt that I was experiencing the depth that a relationship between two human beings can reach, notwithstanding their limitations.

"But let me tell you about the day he died. It was a Sunday. A friend of mine had something important to do, but was in difficulty because her husband didn't like the idea of staying home alone with the children. In order to make things easier for them, Domenico and I invited the whole family over to dinner at our house. Usually Domenico and I went to Mass together. That morning, however, I decided to go earlier, alone in order to start preparing dinner. As I was going up to receive Communion, I felt within me a call that I wanted to answer immediately: 'Jesus, I give you my life, my whole life for you!' It was a brief moment of profound joy. Then I hurried home.

"The day was tiring, and when the guests were gone later that evening, Domenico and I found ourselves together cleaning up the kitchen. As I was finishing up the last dishes, he want on to bed. He was reading 'Something very beautiful,' he told me. When I entered the room I didn't want to disturb him, and being very tired, I slipped into bed. Just as I was falling asleep, he gave me a kiss, 'Goodnight, Angela.'

"At 3:20 a.m. I opened my eyes with a start — the sound of Domenico's gasping had awakened me. Everything was over in just a few minutes: the call to the doctor; then back to Domenico's side, because 'I knew' the end was near and I wanted to be close to him up to the last moment; and then the children awoke. I heard myself repeating. 'Jesus, I offered you my life, not his.' I could feel the desperation grow within me. Then I started to pray the Our Father, but everything stopped — heart, mind and voice — at the words, 'your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' I wanted to do his will; my will would have been different.

"When it was all over, the doctor, who had arrived in the meantime, explained to us what had happened. At this, Aurelio, our youngest, who up to that point hadn't really understood what was happening, let out a scream. With that I understood in a flash what my future life, my kind of solitude would be: 'I have to live for him,' I said to myself, 'for the children,

other people, I can't remain closed in my pain.'

"The following months were very difficult. I understand all the kinds of reactions a widow might have. I think I went through all of them. But the strongest experience was from the graces I received, and still receive. The awareness of Domenico's continued presence, and the participation of many, true friends has been stronger than everything. And when I was alone, my greatest support came from the rosary. During many a sleepless night, eyes wide-open looking into the darkness, I would pray — one Hail Mary after the other. How many I repeated! I was with Mary, and little by little the pain would diminish. I understood many things for the first time, and others became clearer.

"I still cry — and often too. I miss Domenico, a lot. Often I go to visit his grave, and I tell him: 'Listen, there are a few problems here and there with your children. If you don't give me a hand . . . '

"In those moments when I really feel I can't make it anymore, I share what I feel with someone close to me. With unity, with the presence of Jesus in our midst,[2] peace returns. With the light his presence brings, I see things more clearly within myself and faith is restored. I realize that everything follows a plan of God — he knows what he is doing.

"What do I do? I try to give of myself to the others — first of all to the children, but it doesn't stop there. I continue to assist families and individuals in difficulty whom Domenico and I were already helping together before his death, and he still gives me a hand, I'm certain, from heaven. I can't help remembering what he wrote to me a few days before he died . . . I should have mentioned it before, because it's the most important thing.

"On the Tuesday before he died, Domenico was in bed, sick with a little flu. I had to go out to do some shopping, and before leaving I went to see what he might need. Together with his list, he gave me a note saying, 'Read this later, on your way to the store.' When I got outside, I unfolded the note, where he had written: 'To keep asking one another if we are ready to give our lives for each other, at this point, seems a little ridiculous. But if we have the courage to keep on asking, maintaining His presence among us in an always deeper way, then our lives will be sanctified by Jesus in our midst. If I could go out, I'd buy you a flower to express my desire to be one with you, united in his name. That's why I wanted to ask you to do it for me. Bye. Domenico. P.S. Choose the flower you like the most.'

"This was his last will, the inheritance he left — money, we did not have. I find myself returning to the words of that brief note. I know that Jesus can be present among us more than ever now because Domenico is already 'home,' and is always 'ready.' I just have to do all my part, and avoid the temptation of withdrawing into myself and my own problems."

The Unexpected Cut

Alceste Silvi Antonini is 78 years old and has been a widower for five years. He lives now in a community, a Focolare Center, where, with other focolarini[3] of different ages, he bears witness to the Gospel lived together, in unity. He writes:

"It's 2:00 p.m. The sun is shining brightly outside, and Teresa is dying. Then . . . she stops breathing.

"The nurse, Sister Augusta, waits a few minutes, and then gently closes my Teresa's eyelids for the last time. The silence in the large hospital ward seems limitless. Yet it is a silence filled with a presence, because everyone knows what is happening in that corner of the ward, separated from the rest only by a thin curtain.

Alceste Silvi Antonini

"Sister Augusta now gently takes the wedding ring off Teresa's finger and hands it to me. Surprised, I hesitate for a moment, then give to my daughter, Chiaretta, my wedding band, and put Teresa's ring in its place. I happen to glance inside the ring: yes, our wedding date is still engraved there — June 8, 1931.

"Forty-six years have gone by. The wonderful dream is over. But upon awakening, I realize that another dream is just beginning. I feel that I am removed from time and space, completely immersed in the sacred mystery of life and death that is unfolding itself before my eyes.

"Chiaretta's pain is deep: for her, Teresa is gone, and she is aware only of her loss. Lucia, our other daughter, is standing straight, immobile, to one side, with her eyes half-closed. Perhaps for her Teresa is still present. Two days ago she was still traveling along the Pacific coast. We had been able to reach her by phone, and she had taken a flight from Vancouver, by way of the Polar route and had arrived in Rome in time to see her mother before she died. Giuliana, a new friend of the family, is also present. No one else.

"I have acquired a deeper certainty recently that God is Love. I've even thought of death often, but with the serenity of someone who sees everything, even his own existence, from 'above.'

"In fact, I was expecting death to come for me, and instead it arrived for the person who was dearest to me. And now, there she is, Teresa, my treasure: beautiful . . . like someone who already reflects the light of heaven.

"No one at her bedside is crying — a certain sign that, this time at least, death has not won. And this is because Teresa had made of her life a way to sanctity. She had started late to follow the way of the Gospel, but had then gone ahead so fast to be first to reach the goal. And when Jesus knocked at the door asking for

her, she went immediately . . . she was ready.

"As a widower, to my great surprise, I found myself in a completely new dimension. The surprise came from the fact that I was seventy-three years old. At this age, especially when it is the husband who is left alone, everything seems to be tragically over. Having children or grandchildren doesn't change the situation too much. They always have too many things to do, and even when they do everything possible to take in their older relatives, there still remains in the aged an infinite sadness, a sense of being on the outside, useless. It's no one's fault. It's a fact of life in our society, which could mean that it's everyone's fault — including those who today feel old, and up until a short time ago used all their energy in a desperate attempt to pretend they were young. Even when it was no longer true.

"All we have to do is glance through the newspapers and magazines from the past few years to realize that all over the world people are concerned about the problem of 'aging.'

"Generous individuals, as well as far-sighted economists are working hard to alleviate the situation of the aged, attempting to find something useful for them to do. I've heard that the same problem exists for many priests, who can make it neither to live with those who are younger, nor to face a life of solitude.

"And to me, what would happen to me, now? I realized in those days that the devastating, unexpected cut was drawing me mysteriously to go beyond all things around me. Instead of depressing me, it was bringing me up towards 'new heavens and a new earth.'

"This could never have happened, however, without a preparation that had lasted years. For those of us who live in the city, it's hard to see the stars: the neon lights, the smog, the high buildings blocking the view, are all obstacles. But, leaving aside the metaphor we can say that greater obstacles to seeing 'the stars' are found in prejudices, habits, the mentality that dictates efficiency at any cost. . .

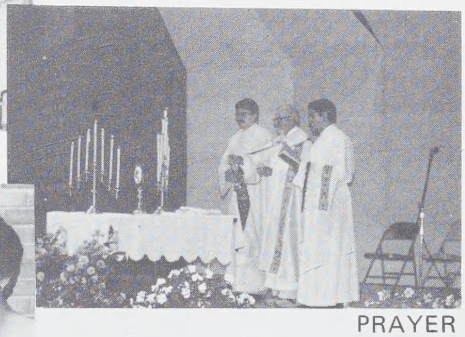
(continued on next page, col. 3)

MARIAPOLIS '82

The Mariapolis is . . . .

PEOPLE

TALKS



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NORTHWEST:	**July 18, after supper — July 24, after breakfast**	Western Washington University Bellingham, Washington
EAST COAST:	**August 8, after supper — August 14, after breakfast**	Alfred University Alfred, New York

For further information about all the Mariapolises, contact the nearest Focolare Center. See addresses on inside back cover.

BUDDHISM TODAY

(continued from page 20)

the most effective way to meet and get to know one another is through a personal, living contact at the level of experience — not discussion — even though it is necessary to have a thorough preparation and deep understanding of the local religious concepts to engage in it. It is also very important to live with them a spiritual experience for it's only when they see how our Christian values are lived, that they are able to penetrate and understand them.

Q: Which could be the mutual enrichment?

A: It is a little hard to say what we can "give" and what we can "receive" from one another. In my experience, an encounter with a Buddhist who is sincere and deep, particularly in his rapport with the Eastern mystics, will lead both of us to a deepening of our own faiths. The first result, I would say, is that we both discover our own religious identity in its most profound aspects.

What can the Christian receive? I think it is the discovery that freedom lies in the deepest recesses of our being — not in noise or in consumerism . . . On the contrary, freedom from all this can help us discover the "entirely different," namely, God.

In the West, the practice of meditation is very limited, whereas in the East, there is a whole gamut of meditations . . . It is not so much a matter of different "ideas," as of different "attitudes." There are, for example, forms and methods of meditation to help one reach an attitude of altruism, of kindness and mercy toward the others. . .

The German theologian Guardini said that perhaps Christ did not have a forerunner only in Judaism in John the Baptist, or Socrates in the Greek culture, but that he had one who indicated the Oriental religious knowledge and the way to transcend it: it would be Buddha.

I think that basically, Buddhism reveals the need for salvation through the most radical way of meeting God: that is, dying to self, to this ego to which we cling so much. This is why all Buddhist realities are presented in negative terms which, however, are meant to express what is most positive: nothingness, emptiness.

Buddhism, on the other hand, coming in contact with Christianity, may certainly be enriched in its own values of altruism through the practice of love directed not only towards God, but towards others as well, a real communion with God as well as neighbor. And it can also benefit from the discovery that the road to salvation does not have to be traveled alone, but can be taken together. At present there is a whole movement of openness towards "the other" which touches upon the religious practices themselves, as well as upon the very relationship with Buddha, which becomes a pure, delicate and loving devotion.

A young mother, a teacher, told me that she loved Buddha more than her four children, more than her husband. It is easy to call him "father" and even, "father and mother."

Another teacher in a meditation center told me, "The more I advance in meditation, the closer I feel to Buddha," even though he believes that Buddha has entered Nirvana. It is surely a valid attitude because it has a positive effect on spiritual advancement. I feel that a good part of this new attitude of openness may be due to the contact with Christianity.

1) The Four Noble Truths focus on the cause of suffering and the way to overcome it.

WORD OF LIFE

(continued from page 21)

How then should we live in order that we too might merit Jesus' praise? We should try to put each word of God into practice, to nourish ourselves with the word moment by moment, making of our lives a work of continuous re-evangelization so that we might have the same thoughts and sentiments as Jesus, we might relive Christ in the world today and show to society, often enmeshed in evil and sin, the divine purity, the limpidness of spirit which the Gospel gives.

During this month then, if possible (that is, if there are others with us who share the same desire), let us try in a special way to put into practice those words of Jesus which contain his commandment of mutual love.

In fact, in John's Gospel, where we find this month's word of life, there is a bond between the word of Jesus and the New Commandment.

According to John, it is in the context of mutual love that the word is lived with its effects of purification, holiness, preservation from sin, fruitfulness, closeness to God. An isolated individual cannot long resist the enticements of the world, whereas in mutual love, all find the healthy environment which protects their authentic Christian life.

Chiara Lubich

[1] From a talk of Pope Paul VI to the parishoners of St. Eusebius, Rome, on February 26, 1967.

ALSO OUR LADY . . .

(continued from page 26)

"For me the situation was different. Someone had been guiding me for quite some time. I already knew the name of a 'star' that would illuminate my way even in the darkest night. Now, more than ever, directing all my attention on it, as on the North Star, continually checking and correcting my compass, I felt that my life could still have a meaning, a goal, and even a full-time occupation.

"Obviously my health would decline; I would become weaker, The 'star' however, though at times covered by clouds, would remain, because the 'star' of which I am speaking, that is attracting me, is Jesus on the cross, at the moment of his abandonment.

"My solitude was also his. In my suffering, my agony, he was present and always would be. I know that with him next to me I will always be able to say: 'My night knows no darkness.'

"And I will never be unoccupied. When every other activity becomes impossible for me, one would remain always: contemplation. It will be my last activity perhaps, but fruitful, because I will always be able to give to the others, through words, writings or even silence, the wonders that I have contemplated."

1) One of the mass movements within the Focolare, which aims at being an instrument to bring unity into family life. 2) Cf. Mt. 18:20. 3),4), See inside back cover.

What is the Focolare Movement?

THE BEGINNINGS

The Focolare Movement began in 1943, in Italy. Chiara Lubich, with a small group of girls, realized in the midst of the total destruction of World War II, that God is the only one worth living for. Hence they began to place the Gospel in the center of their lives. The testament of Jesus became their Ideal: "That all may be one . . . that the world may know that you have sent me, and that you have loved them as you have loved me . . . " (Jn.17: 23). The life lived by these first girls, the spiritual way they spontaneously followed, gave rise to a form of spirituality proper to the Focolare Movement. It represents a powerful means of introducing the Gospel into modern life.

WHO ARE THE FOCOLARINI

The name "Focolarini" takes its origin from the Italian word "fire" and suggests the idea of "carriers of fire."

Single men and women live in separate communities called Focolare Centers. Their principal aim is to achieve unity among themselves through mutual charity practiced twenty-four hours a day. They follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. They work as other lay men and women in regular jobs and professions.

Some married persons, even though continuing to live in their families, participate fully in the life of either the men's or women's Focolare Centers in their common effort to achieve this same unity. They are called "Married Focolarini."

THE VOLUNTEERS

The Volunteers, who are also called the "Volunteers of God," would like to transform all human realities according to the Gospel spirit. For this reason they remain in their jobs and in their professions in order to vivify them with this spirit.

Their aim is to help form a society made of men and women who are made "new" by the Gospel message and who can then bring new life to all fields of human activity (education, business, etc.). This results in new social relationships which, in turn, lead to the realization of new structures of society.

THE LARGEST MEMBERSHIP

The largest membership of the Movement is made up of men, women, and young people of all social conditions who are free of any formal ties with it. Their bond of unity stems from their free and willing acceptance of its spirit. They keep in touch with the Movement and with one another through large or small gatherings, publications, correspondence, and personal contact.

People with other commitments, even those bound to religious institutions, can form part of the Movement too because the Movement exists wherever its spirit is lived. People of non-Christian religions are also counted among the Movement's friends. Also those who owe no allegiance to any faith are often attracted by one or another of the Movement's aspects.

GEN

The new generations of the Focolare Movement form another Movement or, better, three movements: the Gen 2, the Gen 3 and the Gen 4 Movements, divided according to their various age groups. "Gen" stands for new generation.

Thousands of young people all over the world have been attracted by the spirituality of unity. Their number continues to grow.

At the core of this large group of youth, are Gen who have committed themselves to living the Gospel message of love. The Gen use all possible means to share with other youth the conviction they have that the Gospel is the answer to every question and the motive for everything they do.

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"A celebration without end" is how Vincent de Paul describes the lives of those who say "yes" to God by doing his will.

In this book Chiara Lubich explores the many facets of doing God's will, which is one of the central points in the life of the Focolare Movement she founded. Her central thesis is: God is love, and there can be no better way of loving him in return than by doing what he asks of us.

First she puts this fundamental intuition to the test of Scripture. She then moves on to the experiences of some of the great saints, and draws upon the teachings of the Church Fathers, the Second Vatican Council, and the recent popes.

This book is stimulating and practical. It shows that doing God's will involves much more than mere passivity or resignation. Moreover, throughout the book, Chiara Lubich points out that doing God's will is the way to true freedom and to our total fulfillment as human beings.

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